

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MARKEY ASSAILS CARGO LOOPHOLE: UNSEEN, UNSCREENED, UNACCEPTABLE**

**Washington, DC:** Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security, today released a letter to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Tom Ridge asking why no security measures whatsoever are applied to any mail or cargo weighing less than 16 ounces that is placed on passenger airplanes. The shoe bomb worn by Richard Reid, which experts believe could have blown a hole in the fuselage of the Boeing 767 he was flying in, reportedly contained only 10 ounces of plastique explosive. The bomb that blew up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie Scotland in 1988 reportedly contained an estimated 11 to 16 ounces of plastique explosive. Press reports indicated that more than a year ago, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) considered the chances of a terrorist bombing on a passenger airline to be 35-65%, and that cargo is likely to become, or already is, the primary aviation target for terrorists in the short term. Despite that assessment, gaping security loopholes remain.

"It is stunning that the Homeland Security Department continues to expose aircraft passengers to known and preventable risks by allowing all mail and packages that weigh less than 16 ounces to be transported on passenger airlines without going through any screening or security measures whatsoever," said Rep. Markey. "Such packages are not even subject to the flawed 'known shipper' program that the Department unwisely relies upon for packages that are heavier than 16 ounces. The implications of TSA's insistence on screening air passengers' shoes and baggage while allowing the 16 ounce cargo loophole to remain in place are clear: Instead of wearing a shoe bomb or placing the bomb in passenger baggage, both of which would be screened, the next Richard Reid will simply send it in the mail. This is an unacceptable national security risk that must be immediately remedied."

In addition to the "16 ounce cargo security loophole," there remain other aviation security loopholes and problems that are not being adequately addressed by the Bush Administration:

- The Bush Administration continues to oppose the Markey amendment to the Homeland Security Appropriations bill that requires all cargo placed on passenger airlines to be screened, even though the amendment passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 278-146, the technology already exists, and we know, based on the recent arrest of an al Qaeda operative who ran his own shipping business, that Al Qaeda is still interested in using cargo to carry out its deadly plans.
- The TSA has cut the passenger/baggage screening force by 3,000 beginning in May of this year. They will complete a second round of 3,000 cuts by September 30, 2003. These cuts come even as new warnings are issued by the Bush Administration regarding new ways terrorists are looking to target airplanes using cell phones, cameras, and other everyday items that are difficult to search for and require more time and training of screeners.